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A Brief in favour of the
Establishment of a
Canadian Child Welfare
Bureau.

"And Christ rebuked His disciples and said:

'Suffer the little children to come unto Me
and forbid them not, for of such is the Kingdom
of Heaven.'

To all who love children and to
all Canadian Citizens having the
best interests of this Country
at heart during the present crisis.

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PROPOSED CHILD WELFARE BUREAU.

INTRODUCTION.

The following Brief is submitted on the assumption that the Government will be inclined to view this matter with as much consideration, to say the least, as is given to such questions as Hog Cholera among Pigs, or Rust in Wheat. It is unnecessary to draw attention to the fact that more money has been spent concerning such matters by the Federal Authorities than has been spent concerning the vital questions covered by the points enumerated in this Brief.

More money
spent in
investigating
questions
concerning
welfare of
hogs than is
spent in child
welfare.

It is understood that only the salient points are touched upon here. Anything that has been touched upon is simply to emphasize the fact that a great deal of confusion and waste occurs at the present time (concerning methods of Child Welfare) largely due to the fact that no Governmental Agency exists whereby philanthropic societies and public-spirited citizens may be guided in their laudable but often foolishly directed efforts.

Institutions and societies for the care of dependent and orphan children show the widest diversity in nature and method, and exhibit a lack of co-ordination absolutely appalling. As a matter of fact between some of these philanthropic agencies a rivalry exists almost as bitter as between rival business firms. This is regrettable and absolutely unnecessary; it leads to unwise expenditures of public money contributed by the charitably disposed peoples of the Dominion.

In a similar manner agencies for dealing with delinquent children manifest a lamentable lack of co-ordinative effort.

Juvenile Courts and systems of probation have been established in a number of leading cities, but no agency exists for the purpose of collecting for ready and convenient use the valuable information which might be gleaned from the experience of such undertakings. We have no reliable information concerning the Infant Mortality, such questions as illegitimacy, race degeneracy, health and training of the Child, and the recording of births are not by any means up to the standard which should obtain.

At the outset let it be borne in mind that the Children's Bureau would have no power to do administrative work; it could not make any regulations concerning children nor create any institutions for them, its duty being solely to study and report upon conditions affecting Children's Welfare. It would publish the facts secured in any form approved by the Minister of the Department to which the Bureau would be attached; it would endeavor to secure pertinent

Bureau
would not
have ad-
ministrative
powers.

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The Bureau's
duty.

facts and to present them promptly and clearly for use and popular distribution; its effectiveness would depend upon the use made of these facts by the Canadian people.

As most of the subjects enumerated in the Bill, and enumerated as subjects for enquiry by the Bureau are, to a certain extent only, operative in many of the Provinces, the Bureau would become a clearing house for information regarding matters affecting Child Welfare throughout Canada.

Valuable
material
lost.

The Government has already, through various Bureaus, collected much statistical material relative to children, but these statistics are scattered through many reports, and the material has never been brought together and correlated by persons interested primarily in children. The Bureau would gather this material and put it in an easily accessible form.

Digest of
child welfare
laws.

As regards prospective legislation affecting Child Welfare, the Bureau could give valuable information regarding any actual or pending legislation in any Province, and among its other works one of its earliest acts would be to prepare a digest of laws affecting children, both Provincial and Dominion.

Nature of
the Bureau's
work.

It will be noted that the Bill, as drawn and recommended for passage, confines the operation of the Bureau principally and firstly to the question of investigation and of reporting the result of such investigation, the design and purpose being to furnish information in this general way to all parts of the Dominion to the respective Provinces, thereby enabling them to deal more intelligently and more systematically and uniformly with such subjects.

Rights of
Provinces
not
encroached
upon.

The Bill is not designed to encroach upon the rights nor relieve the Provinces from the duty of dealing with such matters, but rather to furnish the information to enable the Provinces to deal more successfully with such subjects. It is clearly understood that the duty to legislate upon this important subject devolves primarily upon the Provinces and the Provinces can more effectively deal with it. But it seems there is a duty upon the part of the Dominion Government to aid in getting information and data with a view of assisting in this work and it is quite clear that the Dominion Government could get such information and data more effectively and thoroughly than the respective Provinces.

1. What would the Bureau do? 2. What measures for the advantage of the Child would the Bureau further? 3. What innovations in Governmental functions would the Bureau introduce?

What the
Bureau
would do.

1. The Bureau would be a clearing house—a source of information and of reliable education on all matters pertaining to the welfare of children and child life, and especially it would investigate and report upon the questions now nowhere answered in complete or unified form and whose great importance to the national life is so strikingly evident. It would investigate legislation affecting children in the various Provinces and all other facts that have a bearing upon the

life, the efficiency, the character, happiness and the training of children. It would in no way duplicate any work now being done by Provincial Governments, but it would strengthen their work and bring into immediate usefulness all of the statistical facts that may be contained in Dominion Governmental reports or kindred reports touching upon Child Welfare. It would not merely collect and classify information; it would also furnish to every community information that was needed to defuse knowledge that had come through study by experts of facts valuable to the child and to the community.

For instance, we do not know with exactitude at the present time how many children are born, how many die in each year within our own borders, nor do we know how many die in infancy of preventible diseases, how many blind children who might have seen the light; we cannot say with exactitude—with even comparative exactitude—the number of children in jails or institutions outside of a few large cities which have Juvenile Courts. There is a state of chaos as regards the treatment or punishment of what are known as delinquent children, and this obtains largely because of lack of knowledge concerning this important phase of Child Welfare. Such information cannot be effectively obtained by private agencies and it is of too vital a nature to be left to chance. Only the Dominion Government can cover the whole field and tell the people about the children with as much care as it tells them of the wheat or the fisheries or the mines.

The need of accurate statistical information.

2. What measures for the advantage of the child and the Dominion would the Bureau further?

2. No direct responsibility or administrative function for furthering new measures would fall upon the experts of the Children's Bureau, but it is easily seen that with the light of knowledge and facts turned by responsible experts upon all phases of Child Welfare, the Canadian people could be trusted—if not with the immediate solution then with serious consideration of the best way of remedying such evils as there may be in our midst in connection with this matter.

Bureau would act as a searchlight.

3. What innovations in the Governmental functions would such a Bureau introduce? The creation of a Children's Bureau contains no startling originality, it would introduce no innovation, no new principles in the functions of Government, it is along the line of what we have been doing for many years to promote knowledge on other matters—on material matters.

Look carefully into the history and development and present scope of the various Bureaus within the authority of the Government and many examples will be found. What we need at the present time, above all things, and need most urgently, is information and the best means of attaining broad publicity on all matters relating to the Children, so that the national intelligence and conscience may be stirred to its full responsibility, for the wise education and guardianship of these children lies primarily upon us.

Nothing startlingly new in ideas of this Bureau.

We have Bureaus and Bureaus to aid and develop commerce and to preserve to posterity the priceless material legacy that God has given to the Dominion. Then let us at least do something to serve that which is more priceless than all, the children, the only real and vital asset of the Nation.

Such a Bureau with trained experts could secure reliable data as to children, the cause of dependency, the results of home placing, the results of institutional training; it could co-ordinate the results of child saving efforts in various parts of the Dominion; its statistical information would unify results of varying systems of child saving and it could speedily inform those interested of the results of these investigations by means of Bulletins issued without delay.

Individual Provinces may do much in this matter, but the information they obtain is necessarily of a local character and lacks co-ordination and would leave the problem of child life just as chaotic and "patchy" as it is at present. It is only by Federal effort that the work can be done on an efficient scale.

Dominion regulation of child-caring agencies not contemplated.

It must be clearly understood, and we desire to emphasize this once more, that we do not favor Dominion regulation of child care even if that were possible; but what we do favor is a National Bureau to study the Child Welfare problem and to disseminate information which it gathers, so that those all through the Dominion who are engaged in work and interested in work of such a nature may benefit and profit by the labors of the Bureau.

Bureau's work would not conflict with Provincial work, but would very greatly help Provincial work.

The Dominion Government has a positive duty to perform in this connection. Its agents can obtain much information which cannot be obtained by other Governmental jurisdictions and the work would in no way conflict with the work of Provinces or Municipalities.

Indisputable facts needed

The most important factor in the Dominion.

Facts are the most powerful factors in reforms. We must first get at causes—the real causes—before we can hope to find remedies, and the work of the Bureau would be placing facts before the public. The country as it will be 20, 30 or 40 years hence, well, as it will be then will depend a great deal upon how we handle our business now; how we handle our great industrial work; how we handle the farms and mines and potential wealth of the Dominion, but what counts most of all is the kind of men and women that there will be at that time in the country. No Nation is safe unless in the average family there are healthy, happy children. If these children are not brought up well, amid a proper environment and with proper care, both moral and physical, they will not be merely a curse to themselves and their parents, but they will mean the ruin of the Dominion in years to come, and its potential wealth will count for nought.

One of the earliest and first works of the Bureau would naturally be directed to obtaining correct information and data relative to Infant Mortality. This is a subject which would head the list, being the fundamental subject and one which could be done a little at a time although even this

plan might require a considerable period. Sir Arthur Newsholm, the great English Statistician, has said:

“Infant Mortality is the most sensitive index we possess of social welfare, the infant death-rate measures the intelligence, health and right-living of parents, the moral standards of communities and Governments and the efficiency of physicians, health officers, nurses and educators.”

Infant mortality.

The Bureau would also obtain information as to the total number of dependent children in the country. There is no specific information at the present time to show how many dependent children are inmates of institutions, there is no information as to the total numbers of sub-normal children. The care of all children over whom parental guardianship is lacking or inadequate, especially those classed as neglected children, is in the last analysis a public function; all such care and supervision are important, many of them are urgent. One thing we know and that is that no Province in the Dominion at the present time is making adequate provision for its sub-normal children, i.e., its defective and dependent children. Classified directories of available agencies dealing with children are needed, we should know what institutions we have for feeble-minded or crippled or blind or deaf children, what institutions we have for Juvenile Delinquents. There should be an annually revised directory of Juvenile Courts, there should be information as to the actual cost of caring for dependent and feeble-minded children in institutions and descriptions of the various types of modern institutions, we should have information regarding the benefits to be expected from pensions to widowed mothers. It seems obviously a sound principle that no child should be separated from the care of a good mother because the latter has the misfortune to be poor and yet such separations are taking place every day merely on the grounds of poverty alone. Another matter for enquiry is the inequality of the operation of the Juvenile Court Laws. Some of the most conspicuous and best equipped Courts and their methods have been studied and their results on the whole admired; at the present moment, however, a Province may institute in a city a Juvenile Court Act, the Court in all probability will be established in the largest city of the Province, it may be a well-equipped Court, with competent officials, with a comfortable Detention Home, with all the necessary paraphernalia for the successful prosecution of its work, but throughout other parts of the same Province, outside of that city, every expedient for helping a child may be lacking, and though it is regarded under the Law as not being a criminal it may be held in a jail just as it was before the Juvenile Act was established; it may be, in fact, dealt with as if there were no Juvenile Act at all, while in the same Province, as in the city alluded to above, there may be a splendid Court in operation, but in operation only within the precincts of that city. And again, even where the probation part of the law is carefully worked out and faithfully administered, the proper Provincial institutions for the training and care of certain children may be lacking, and so the purpose of the Law is defeated. For instance, feeble-minded children may be

Dependent Children.

Mental defectives.

Classified directories.

Widows' pensions.

Juvenile courts.

Danger that children may not obtain the benefit of the Juvenile Act.

brought into a Juvenile Court, obviously unable to protect themselves, obviously a social menace at large; yet, unless the Province provided permanent institutional care for them, they must be punished as responsible moral agents or placed in institutions with normal children to the demoralization of both classes, or allowed their liberty with deplorable results to the normal boys and girls with whom they come in contact.

The
illegitimate
child.

Again, the Bureau would be interested in studying phases of the problem of illegitimacy, particularly the meaning of this handicap to the individual child and the relation which exists between illegitimacy and dependency. Such a study would throw a light upon other phases of Child Welfare—thus the subject would be met with in studies of infant mortality and under the topic of Orphanage and in regard to methods of placing children out and adopting them out, problems of institutional care and the assumption of guardianship by public and private agencies would be discussed. Here we would come very close to children who are born without the protection of a normal home life and a very important phase of the subject is the interrelation between illegitimacy and feeble-mindedness.

Children's
playgrounds.

It may be interesting to cite here another subject touched upon in the Bill and with which the Bureau would deal, viz: Child Recreation. In the United States no less than nine States have legislated on this subject and enacted what has been called the Playground Law, which specifically authorizes the purchase or maintenance of playgrounds for children from public funds. There is a growing recognition that all public recreation must be developed and maintained with experts in charge if it is to serve the need for healthful pleasure and physical development of the child. We have already alluded to the need for information concerning fresh or proposed legislation covering these subjects. A review of our legislation for the past few years would reveal that there is a steadily growing volume of Laws whose objective is the protection of various classes of children, legislation of various kinds is urged by different groups of people acting independently and the inevitable outcome is that Laws secured by these people are—as might be expected—often contradictory and sometimes even defeat each other. This is notably true of compulsory education, child labor and dependency Laws, all of which must dovetail perfectly if the child is to be the real gainer.

Need of
federal
digest
of child
welfare
legislation.

The Bureau could give valuable help along such lines, and also as regards physical standards for industry in child labor. As a general rule, compulsory school attendance ceases at the age of 14, the age which is said by competent medical men to be the most critical period of growth for the child. While many children leave school at 14 or earlier to go to work, who are no poorer than others who remain in school, on the whole, it is not the rich, but the poor children with a lower standard of living who add to the family income by going to work early. These boys and girls leave school life, the main purpose of which, in theory at least, is their care and development, and they take their labor to markets where

Child
labour.

the rules are inevitably those of trade; they are by Law, minors, unable to contract with employers, they take to market the muscle, and the mind and the legal disabilities of a child. One day great authorities are experimenting on the best methods of training their minds, of developing their physical power, concerned about the ventilation of their school rooms, the shapes of their desks, the character of their food, and the next day these same children are beyond the reach of all those costly solitudes, for they have gone to work. If a community were to choose out of its children a group who most need the protection and stimulus afforded by the schools, they would choose the very children and retain in school the very children who now leave. Such records as are available of the height and weight and development of various grades of children prove that it is the great average of the children of least resistance who are thus thrust into the condition of the greatest strain and the least protection. Full and intelligent direction of the physical and mental powers of the child workers of the Dominion requires expert and exact investigation. It is clear enough that because one group of individuals is employed at manual labor and another does not perform any such labor, it is not always to be supposed that the latter grows in a normal manner while the former's growth is impelled. Labor is even considered a necessary factor in the development of the body and only becomes a hindrance to growth if it is exceedingly hard or exercised under unfavorable conditions. The Children's Bureau would call attention to these needed studies and would propose carefully considered plans. The more rapidly the restrictive child labor legislation becomes uniform, the more evident must be the need of studying the welfare of the young worker within the occupation, so that we may secure just standards for the use of labor as new standards for material are being developed.

The Bureau
and the
problem of
child labour.

Again, is the physical development of rural children better than of city children? If not, what are the available means of improving it? What are the social reasons for rural delinquency? Is there a lack of innocent recreation in rural communities which tends towards delinquency? Is the economic standard of life too low in certain localities and in certain agricultural occupations to permit of a fair chance for children and young persons? How can vocational training be made effective for rural children? Do large numbers of rural children work too early and too hard with loss of education and detriment to health and to physical development?

Physical
development
of rural
children.

Expert investigation is required to secure answers to such questions, but these questions have been raised and the answers are most important and vital, in fact, of urgent necessity. If the conditions surrounding the greater part of our children are to be understood, and if we are to be sure that we are making progress in securing a fair and equal chance for every child.

Are we
securing to
each child a
fair and
equal
chance.

While we are speaking of child labor, we may add that the growing sense of responsibility for giving boys and girls some knowledge of the occupations which are open to them,

the character of the work, the pay, the chances for promotion, would be shown by this Bureau; it would publish special pamphlets addressed to boys and girls leaving school, and these pamphlets would contain detailed descriptions of various occupations, rates of pay, conditions of work, necessary qualifications, promise of advancement.

Child
immigrants.

The subject of Child Immigration, the opening for child immigrants throughout the Dominion, the best means of placing a child immigrant, with due regard to its welfare and usefulness, would be one of the subjects under examination by this Bureau.

Care of
children by
Children's
Aid Societies.

The care of children by Child-placing agencies (by Child-placing agencies is meant agencies such as Children's Aid Societies, which are empowered under certain Acts to remove children from people of a degraded or vicious character, and who are also empowered to place such children in foster homes, by adoption, to people who are willing to take upon themselves the legal responsibility of guardians) the best methods of dealing with such children and of co-ordinating the work of such societies would be investigated.

Care of
children in
institutions.

Under the heading—The Care of Children in Permanent Institutions—would come Dependent Children, mostly in Orphanages, Children's Homes, etc., the methods of caring for them would be examined, the reasons for their being in such institutions would be enquired into and the objects for which they were being trained; also what scope and opportunity is afforded to them to become self-supporting on their leaving the institution.

Care of
orphan
children of
our soldiers.

The investigation of the effect of the Moving Picture Theatre upon the child would also be undertaken, facts and statistics regarding this subject would be compiled and circulated for the information of those taking an interest in legislation affecting the attendance of children at such places, and lastly, very great care would be devoted to the questions of the care, education and maintenance of the orphan children of our gallant soldiers who have fallen; and plans would be carefully devised and recommended to the public as to the best measures to take and the best way to co-ordinate and combine philanthropic efforts for the care and welfare of such children.

F. J. BILLIARDE,

Winnipeg, March, 1918.

**“And they disputed among themselves
who should be greatest”**

— and —

“Christ set a little child in their midst.”

